

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 000520

SIPDIS

STATE FOR OES/HA, EUR/WE
HHS FOR INTERNATIONAL BUDASHEWITZ
USDA FOR ITP/MACKE/THOMAS, CMP/DLP/WETZEL
USDA FOR FAS PASS FSIS AND APHIS
CDC FOR DR. DBELL
HOMELAND SECURITY FOR OIA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [TBIO](#) [CASC](#) [AMGT](#) [FR](#) [KFLU](#)

SUBJECT: UPDATED FRENCH AVIAN FLU PLAN

REF: 05 Paris 7573, and previous

1. Summary. In its updated strategic plan to combat avian flu, the French government recognizes the six alert phases defined by WHO and details the roles and responsibilities of government agencies that would be involved in the event of a pandemic. The plan also underscores the importance of international cooperation and coordination, and announces the reinforcement of means allocated to the Pasteur Institutes in Asia. Additional masks, antiviral treatments, and vaccines are being ordered. End summary.

New Strategic Plan

2. On January 11, Health Minister Xavier Bertrand officially presented the updated version of the French plan to combat an avian pandemic flu. The plan can be found at the GOF website dedicated to avian flu: <http://www.grippeaviaire.gouv.fr>. The previous plan, prepared in late 2004, was released in May 2005. The new version incorporates the results of recent avian flu preparedness exercises conducted in France (June 2005, ref A) and at the EU level (November 2005).

More "Operational"

3. The new plan outlines three main objectives:

To care for the maximum number of patients at home. Access to hospital care will be strictly limited to the most serious cases to avoid the saturation of emergency services.

To guarantee access to medical treatment.

Anticipate and minimize economic and social disruptions in the event of a pandemic.

The Structure

4. Not only does the plan adopt WHO's six phases of pandemic alert, but it also defines the GOF agencies key to each phase of alert -- Office of the Prime Minister, Agriculture, Interior, Health Ministries, and inter-ministerial crisis management structures. It further elaborates on the roles and responsibilities for each agency. Each agency is tasked to develop a "continuity plan" for all centralized and decentralized services, establishments under the ministry's supervision, and socio-economic services coming under the agency's responsibility.

Social/Economic Stability

5. The revised plan details measures which could be adopted by the Prime Minister to address a pandemic situation, e.g. closing borders, suspension of public transportation, organization of transportation for the sick, interruption of "non essential" economic activities and restriction of professional activities, closing of child care centers and schools, stockpiling of foodstuff, postponement of public gatherings, implementation of price controls, requisitioning of staff, goods and services,

restricted access to energy resources, etc.

Stockpiling: More is Better

16. Protective masks: The GOF has ordered another 52 million protective masks for medical workers in addition to the 148 million already delivered to 272 medical establishments. In total, 200 million masks are to be available by May 2006, reportedly representing one-third of the annual world production. France is reportedly developing its own mask production capacity: 140 million protective masks will be manufactured in France in 2006, with the aim of producing 300 to 400 million per year.

17. Anti-projection masks: Paris has also secured 250 million "anti-projection masks" for flu victims, in order to prevent a flu patient from contaminating his/her surroundings. The new plan notes France will order another 750 million.

18. Antiviral medicine: The new plan provides for the delivery, by 2007, of 10 million additional doses of Tamiflu and 9 million of Relenza. By 2007, France will have stockpiled 33 million antiviral treatments, compared to 14 million at the end of 2005. Health Minister Xavier Bertrand noted that the new figures are "significantly above" the 25 percent population coverage advocated by WHO. France, he said, wants to be able to avoid the problem of resistance to one specific anti-viral medicine and thus the reasoning for the increased stockpiling of Relenza. The Minister further added that because some of its Tamiflu is being kept as bulk medicine its potency can last for up to ten years. Anti-viral medicine will be distributed at no cost on an 'as needed' basis in case of a pandemic.

19. Vaccines: The GOF is manufacturing vaccines against H5N1 to be used in the event of a pandemic. Originally, the GOF had ordered 40 million doses of the H5N1 vaccine. Contemporaneous with the release of the new strategic plan, Health Minister Bertrand announced the GOF's intent to increase the amount of vaccine to 62 million doses in order to "insure the vaccination of all French citizens," and indicated that the ministry was working directly with the pharmaceutical laboratories accordingly.

Improving information and training

10. The GOF has also defined and started implementing a major information campaign targeting both the health community and the general public. Key messages focus on hygiene/prevention but also crisis management measures in order to avoid overwhelming hospital emergency services. The distribution of leaflets/posters in travel agencies, railway stations, and airports will be increased. The French media has asked to play its part in informing the general public as well. Mainly under the aegis of the Pasteur Institute, training and dissemination of information on avian influenza preparedness is underway.

Emphasis on International Cooperation

11. The new plan highlights international coordination, particularly at the European level. Bertrand indicated on January 11 that France recently proposed that each EU member-state contribute 1-3 percent of its national antiviral stockpile to a "European" stockpile. The plan also provides for the reinforcement of capacity at Pasteur Institutes in Southeast Asia, with notably the creation of 20 virologist and epidemiologist positions.

Other measures

12. Exercises: France will stage two full-scale exercises in February and March 2006, the first one at the regional level (similar

to the one in Finistere in November 25); the second one at the national level to ensure that all professionals and authorities concerned "know their role and responsibilities."

13. Poultry Confinement: Following the release of the plan, the GOF announced on January 13 that mandatory confinement of poultry was extended to 32 new departments in continental France. Altogether 58 departments (out of a hundred) are now subject to this requirement.

14. Agriculture Fair: For the first time in its history, the International Agriculture Fair in Paris (February 25-March 5) will not feature poultry, in accordance with a decree by the Agriculture Ministry, despite strong protests by French poultry producers.

STAPLETON